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# Daily News Brief

## Today's Clips

- [Acquisition: More attention from Congress could lead to smoother EIS transition \(FedScoop\)](#)
- [Policy: 2021 spending bill: Cyber, federal buildings are winners, IT modernization is a loser \(Federal News Network\)](#)
- [Policy: Massive Omnibus Bill Has Cuts and Hikes for Construction Programs \(Engineering News-Record\)](#)
- [IT/Technology: Stimulus bill includes .gov bill to help states and localities move domains \(StateScoop\)](#)
- [Real Estate: Trump Sets 'Beautiful' as the New Standard for Federal Buildings \(Bloomberg\)](#)
- [Real Estate: Keep It Classical, Says Trump Order On Federal Architecture \(NPR\)](#)
- [Real Estate: Trump Wants the President to Be Notified If the Government Constructs a Brutalist Building \(Washingtonian\)](#)
- [Real Estate: Trump Signs Executive Order Promoting Classical Architecture for Federal Buildings \(Architectural Record\)](#)
- [Real Estate: Trump signs executive order calling for classical architecture for all federal buildings \(Washington Business Journal\) FULL TEXT](#)

The purpose of the GSA News Clips is to provide employees with access to recent articles about the agency published by external links and periodicals. The posting of such articles does not constitute an endorsement of the source or reflect the official policy or position of GSA.

### Acquisition [More attention from Congress could lead to smoother EIS transition \(FedScoop\)](#)

On the surface, it was a small gesture. The data was already being collected by the [General Services Administration](#) and made publicly available. And new categories are added to the scorecard pretty regularly. The transition to [EIS](#) is just one of now nine components on which the committee will score agencies' IT acquisition and management "hygiene" via the scorecard, which was originally a measure of federal compliance with statutes in the Federal IT Acquisition Reform Act.

### Policy [2021 spending bill: Cyber, federal buildings are winners, IT modernization is a loser \(Federal News Network\)](#)

If you are looking for good news in the IT modernization sector, the Federal Citizen Services Fund at the General Services Administration is receiving \$55 million — the same amount as last year. Congress also is giving GSA the ability to carry over funding from year-to-year of up to \$100 million.

### Policy [Massive Omnibus Bill Has Cuts and Hikes for Construction Programs \(Engineering News-Record\)](#)

Elsewhere in the legislation, the General Services Administration's federal buildings construction account would rise by \$78 million, or a hefty 51%, to \$230 million for 2021. That sum includes allocations to build new federal courthouses in Hartford, Conn., and Chattanooga, Tenn.

### IT/Technology [Stimulus bill includes .gov bill to help states and localities move domains \(StateScoop\)](#)

Nationwide, there are about 39,000 local governments. But collectively, they have registered fewer than 4,000 .gov domains, according to the General Services Administration, which currently administers the TLD. In addition to the security features, .gov addresses are considered more reliable because the suffix conveys legitimacy. That's been a particular concern around [election security](#), as officials this year implored people to get information about voting from [trusted government sources](#).

### Real Estate [Trump Sets 'Beautiful' as the New Standard for Federal Buildings \(Bloomberg\)](#)

The presidential action stops short of mandating that all new federal buildings are built in a classical style, saying merely that they must be "beautiful."

Under the order, a "Council for Improving Federal Civic Architecture" will be formed to recommenced updates to the General Services Administration's architectural guidelines.

### Real Estate [Keep It Classical, Says Trump Order On Federal Architecture \(NPR\)](#)

The council will include the Commissioner of the GSA Public Building Service, the Secretary of the Commission of Fine Arts, the Architect of the Capitol and other officials as well as up to twenty people to be selected by the president.

### Real Estate [Trump Wants the President to Be Notified If the Government Constructs a Brutalist Building \(Washingtonian\)](#)

In Washington, DC, the order reads, "classical architecture shall be the preferred and default architecture for Federal public buildings absent exceptional factors necessitating another kind of architecture." Indeed, the order calls for the administrator of the General Services Administration to notify the President of the United States if the government decides to build any structure that deviates from "traditional and classical architecture," mentioning "Brutalist or Deconstructivist architecture" in particular as something the President should definitely hear about.

**Real Estate Trump Signs Executive Order Promoting Classical Architecture for Federal Buildings (Architectural Record)**

Notably, the recently signed order only mandates classical architecture as "the preferred and default architecture for Federal public buildings" in Washington, D.C., "absent exceptional factors necessitating another kind of architecture." But it creates new guidelines for all Federal buildings, and an approvals mechanism that sidelines the General Services Administration's Design Excellence program.

**Real Estate Trump signs executive order calling for classical architecture for all federal buildings (Washington Business Journal) FULL TEXT**

President [Donald Trump](#) on Monday signed a long-brewing [executive order](#) that makes classical architecture the preferred style of federal buildings — and calls on the administrator of the General Services Administration to notify the president if a federal building they seek to approve deviates from classical designs.

But the order does not mandate classical style, instead saying federal structures should simply "uplift and beautify public spaces, inspire the human spirit, ennoble the United States, command respect from the general public, and, as appropriate, respect the architectural heritage of a region."

It goes on to define the "general public" as members of the public who are not artists, architects, engineers, art or architecture critics, instructors or professors of art or architecture or members of the building industry.

The order also creates a Council on Improving Federal Civic Architecture that must submit a report by Sept. 30 that recommends updates to the GSA's policies and procedures, including the GSA's policies for design selection. The council will be comprised of the Commission of Fine Arts, the secretary of the Commission of Fine Arts, the architect of the capitol, commissioner of the GSA's Public Building Service, chief architect of the GSA and "other officers or employees of the federal government as the president may, from time to time, designate," and up to 20 additional members from outside the federal government appointed by the president.

The order, [which first surfaced in early 2020](#), takes aim at the Design Excellence Program, which sets nationwide policies for selecting architects and integrated design teams for GSA commissions, and 1962's Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture, which set a precedent that designs for federal buildings should come from architects to the government, and not the other way around.

"The resulting federal architecture sometimes impresses the architectural elite, but not the American people who the buildings are meant to serve," the order reads. "Many of these new federal buildings are not even visibly identifiable as civic buildings."

The shift away from classical styles has left D.C. "a discordant mix of classical and modernist designs," the order reads, with the Hubert H. Humphrey Department of Health and Human Services Building and the Robert C. Weaver Department of Housing and Urban Development Building "attracting widespread criticism for their Brutalist designs."

When the order first surfaced in February, the American Institute of Architects and other organizations pushed back against any mandates on style.

"The prospect of an executive order that would dictate an official style of architecture goes against our fundamental right as citizens to freely communicate by all mediums," [Michael Hickok](#), co-owner and principal of D.C. architecture firm Hickok Cole, said in a statement sent to the Washington Business Journal in February. "Architecture, like all art forms, is meant to capture a particular moment in time as a visual testimony by the people. A mandate that would promote uniformity and condemn diversity not only misrepresents the current state of this nation's culture but the very democratic values it was built upon."

Language from the order has already made its way into some GSA solicitations, including [plans for a new federal courthouse](#) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida located about an hour's drive from Mar-a-Lago, a resort owned by Trump.

There is no mention in the order of the J. Edgar Hoover Building, the Brutalist headquarters of the FBI, which is located near [Donald Trump's](#) hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue NW. Trump scuttled a plan to move the agency's headquarters into the region's suburbs, which would have opened a full city block to redevelopment, potentially as a hotel. Instead, the Trump administration has pushed for the FBI to develop a new headquarters at the site.

News clips are produced by the Office of Strategic Communication. For questions or to add news stories we may have missed, contact Matthew Burrell, [matthew.burrell@gsa.gov](mailto:matthew.burrell@gsa.gov).



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The New York Times  
**The Morning**

December 17, 2020



By [David Leonhardt](#)

**Good morning. The Senate seems to have a deal on virus relief — despite Mitch McConnell’s “red line.”**



Mitch McConnell speaking at the Capitol on Tuesday. Pool photo by Rod Lamkey

**51 is greater than 1**

Over the spring and summer, Mitch McConnell repeatedly declared that he had a litmus test for any new coronavirus stimulus bill: It had to protect businesses from lawsuits from workers or customers who contracted the virus.

“We have a red line on liability,” [he said at one point](#). “I won’t put a bill on the floor that doesn’t have liability protection in it,” [he said at another](#). “No bill will pass the Senate without liability protection for everyone related to the coronavirus,” [he added](#).

But McConnell, the Republican leader in the Senate, has since erased that red line. Congressional leaders and Steven Mnuchin, the Treasury secretary, [are nearing agreement on a \\$900 billion bill](#) that doesn’t include liability protection.

**So why did McConnell, arguably the savviest politician in Washington, fold?**

The answer offers an important reminder of how the Senate really works and how it could become less dysfunctional in the near future than it has been lately.

When people talk about the Senate, they often imagine that McConnell, as the majority leader, is all-powerful and can prevent any bill he doesn’t like from coming up for a vote. [That’s not the case](#). Any senator can propose that a bill receive a vote. If at least 50 other senators want it to receive one, it will.

In recent decades, though, senators have voluntarily surrendered this power to their party’s leader, giving him (and, no, the Senate [has never had](#) a female majority or minority leader) a veto over what comes to the floor. The practice helps keep parties unified.

But it comes with a major downside. It makes bipartisan compromise harder to achieve. Coalitions that could pass a bill — but that don’t include the majority leader — don’t get the chance to form. “By stopping the legislative process

before it starts,” James Wallner, a former Republican Senate staff member, has told me, “it makes compromise harder.”

On the latest round of stimulus, a bipartisan group of senators changed the dynamic by making clear that they strongly favored additional aid. They did not publicly threaten to go around McConnell, but they didn’t have to. He can count to 51, and he was also worried that the two Republican candidates in next month’s Georgia Senate runoffs were “getting hammered” over the lack of a deal.

(McConnell did win a big concession as part of abandoning his red line: The proposed deal does not contain aid to state and local governments, even though the bipartisan group had included it in their earlier proposal and despite many economists favoring such aid.)

It’s possible this bipartisan deal will end up being a one-time event. But it doesn’t have to be. Senators have it within their power to find other areas of compromise next year, during Joe Biden’s presidency — even if McConnell does not favor those deals.

“In politics victory begets victory,” Rahm Emanuel, the Democratic former House member and Chicago mayor, told me yesterday. “The center-out governing coalition has a win under their belt.” It is a [“big opportunity for Biden,”](#) Emanuel said.

Perhaps most intriguing, senators have the power to craft compromises regardless of which party wins the Georgia runoffs and controls the Senate.

THE LATEST NEWS

POLITICS

- The [proposed stimulus deal](#) is expected to include roughly \$300 per week in enhanced unemployment benefits, about half the size of the enhanced benefits that the federal government paid during the spring.
- The bill will also most likely include an additional round of direct payments to individuals; a new emergency rental assistance program; and additional funding for food assistance, small businesses, schools, broadband and vaccine distribution.
- Jerome Powell, chairman of the Federal Reserve, [emphasized the need for more stimulus](#). “The case for fiscal policy right now is very, very strong,” he said.
- President-elect Joe Biden picked [Brenda Mallory](#), an environmental lawyer, to lead the Council on Environmental Quality, which coordinates environment policy. Mallory is expected to focus the office on issues of environmental justice.

THE VIRUS



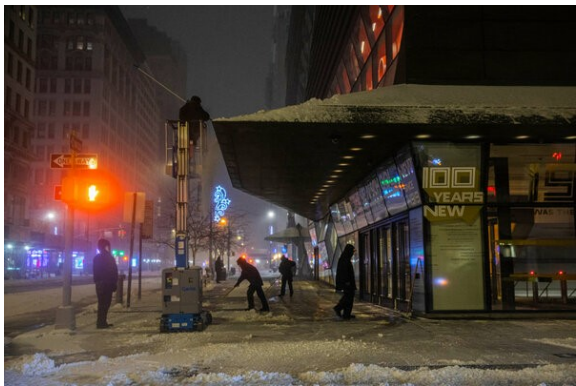
Hermina Levin, an 85-year-old Florida resident, receiving the vaccine yesterday. Joe Raedle/Getty Images

- The vaccine has started [making its way into nursing homes](#), whose residents and staff members account for at least a third of Covid-related

deaths in the U.S. “It was such a quick shot that no one should be afraid,” Patricia John, a 93-year-old in West Virginia, said.

- To find out how many doses your state can expect, The Times has a [vaccine distribution tracker](#).
- Vice President Mike Pence says he [will receive the vaccine](#) on camera tomorrow. Biden said he was also likely to receive it in public, to “demonstrate to the American people that it’s safe.”
- President Emmanuel Macron of France [tested positive](#). In the U.S., [David Bernhardt](#), the secretary of the interior, tested positive, the latest Trump administration official to do so.
- Some U.S. hospitals [found a surprise](#) in their vaccine deliveries: Some of the glass vials that are supposed to hold five doses contained enough for a sixth — or even a seventh — person.
- Americans ages 25 to 44 died at historically high rates between March and July, suggesting that the virus may be more damaging to younger adults than was previously understood, a new academic study found. (You can read [a Times Op-Ed by the study’s authors](#).)

OTHER BIG STORIES



Snow in Manhattan this morning. Hiroko Masuike/The New York Times

- A major winter storm shut down virus testing sites and schools and created deadly road conditions along the East Coast. Follow The Times’s updates [here](#).
- Federal prosecutors [charged a man](#) with plotting to hijack an airplane and crash it into a building in the U.S. and said he was an operative for the Shabab, a Qaeda branch in East Africa.
- A French court [found 14 people guilty](#) of aiding the 2015 attack on the magazine Charlie Hebdo, by supplying the attackers with cash, weapons and vehicles.
- Major League Baseball will [add seven Negro leagues](#) that operated from 1920 to 1948 to its official records, granting recognition to more than 3,400 players and shaking up the game’s record books.

MORNING READS





Photo Illustration by The New York Times; Getty Images

**Pricey Fish:** A Times tech reporter looks back at the [10 Bitcoin she spent on a sushi dinner in 2013](#) — a sum that, seven years later, is worth about \$200,000.

**Surprise Donations:** MacKenzie Scott, the world’s 18th-richest person, [is giving away billions](#), including large donations to colleges and universities that serve often overlooked students. She has donated nearly \$4.2 billion to hundreds of organizations over the past four months.

**From Opinion:** The Times’s [Elizabeth Bruenig](#) witnessed the execution of Alfred Bourgeois, a cognitively impaired man, who was convicted of murdering his daughter.

**Lives Lived:** Jack Steinberger shared a Nobel Prize in Physics in 1988 for expanding understanding of the ghostly neutrino, a ubiquitous subatomic particle, opening up “entirely new opportunities for research into the innermost structure and dynamics of matter,” according to the Nobel committee. [Steinberger died at 99](#).

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ARTS AND IDEAS



Jessica Pons for The New York Times

The rise of ‘tea’ accounts

Maybe it’s because of how bored people are: The pandemic has been [good for the gossip industry](#). But it doesn’t look the way it used to.

The gossip business — which grew up with newspapers in the 20th century and then spread to celebrity magazines and websites — is expanding to Instagram. Accounts dedicated to gossip (also known as “tea” accounts, as in [“spilling the tea”](#)) are flourishing.

[Deuxmoi, a celebrity-focused account](#), has grown from about 45,000 followers in March to 513,000 now. TikTok Room, which focuses on the lives of TikTok stars, jumped from 300,000 followers to nearly two million in that period, [Vox reports](#).

The gossip on many of these accounts — which ranges from the scandalous to the mundane (like tipping habits and reactions to selfie requests) — is rarely verified. Instead, it relies on tips and often deals in blind items. “I don’t consider myself a news source,” the woman behind Deuxmoi told Vox. “I’m honestly like the moderator of a live message board.”

Of course, the old-fashioned gossip wasn’t exactly authoritative, either. It also trafficked in blind items, grudges and puffery. Sometimes, form changes more than content.

PLAY, WATCH, EAT

WHAT TO COOK



Craig Lee for The New York Times

This [tomato soup](#) is simple yet satisfying. (Grilled cheese optional.)

MOVIE ROUND TABLE

A film adaptation of “Ma Rainey’s Black Bottom,” August Wilson’s 1982 play, is coming to Netflix tomorrow. It features Chadwick Boseman, in his final film role, and [Viola Davis](#).

SMART COOKIES

In recent years, Oreo has released dozens of new and often offbeat flavors, including Hot Chicken Wing Oreos and Wasabi Oreos. [Why?](#)

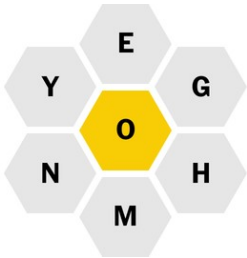
WHAT TO LISTEN TO

Ira Glass, the founder and host of “This American Life,” chose his [favorite episodes](#) of the award-winning public radio program for its 25th anniversary.

LATE NIGHT

The late-night hosts [joked](#) about President Trump’s plan to live on his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida. (His would-be neighbors [are looking](#) to enforce a decades-old agreement that the private social club cannot be used as a full-time residence.)

NOW TIME TO PLAY



The pangrams from yesterday’s Spelling Bee were *deathly* and *heatedly*. Today’s puzzle is above — or you can [play online](#) if you have a Games subscription.

Here’s [today’s Mini Crossword](#), and a clue: Crust, mantle or core (five letters).

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***Thanks for spending part of your morning with The Times. See you tomorrow. — David***

P.S. On the Twitter account [@2ShotsInTheArm](#), nurses and doctors are sharing photos and videos of themselves getting the Covid vaccine.

You can see [today’s print front page here](#).

Today’s episode of “[The Daily](#)” is about the U.S. government’s antitrust lawsuit against Facebook. On [the latest Modern Love podcast](#), a hard-earned holiday lesson on desire.

*Claire Moses, Ian Prasad Philbrick and Sanam Yar contributed to The Morning. You can reach the team at [themorning@nytimes.com](mailto:themorning@nytimes.com).*

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For the many deaths that will occur because you delayed the transition for Biden.  
Get over it, Trump lost. You are both losers.  
You are pathetic. You are a disgrace. Time for you to look for a new job - scrubbing toilets at Mar-a-lago. I'm sure Trump aka  
Shitler will hire you.  
Good grief - you are disgusting.